

Week of October 14, 2002: MDOT Flash Facts

Topic: Vehicle-Deer Collisions

Monday:

Opener/Fact:

- Maine is a great place to see wildlife. But hitting a large animal with your vehicle can be devastating, even deadly.
- About 4,000 deer-vehicle crashes were reported in Maine last year. Two people died in Deer-vehicle collisions from 1999 to 2001.

Why are vehicle-deer crashes such a concern?

- They happen frequently, an average of more than 10 a day are reported (an annual average).
- They happen throughout the state, including heavily populated areas.
- Hitting a deer can be very dangerous. Their jumping ability can easily cause them to strike your vehicle's windshield.
- They move quickly, often in groups, and frequently at night.
- Deer-vehicle crashes are most common from October through December.

Wednesday:

Opener/Fact

- More than twelve thousand deer-vehicle crashes occurred in the past three years. Deer crashes have resulted in more than 500 injuries during the past three years. Two fatalities occurred from 1999 to 2001.

Tips:

Reduce your chances of hitting a deer:

- Collisions with deer can happen anytime. But, most deer-vehicle crashes happen during the evening and nighttime.
- October through December are the most frequent deer-vehicle crash months. Deer are more likely to roam this time of year due to mating and hunting season (but crashes can happen any time of the year).
- When there are no other drivers in front of you or approaching, drive with your high beams on. This will illuminate the deer's eyes and give you more advanced identification of the animal.
- Deer can be unpredictable and may be startled by bright headlights, vehicle horns, and fast-moving traffic.
- Travel at a safe speed and pay attention to the driving task so you can quickly react to an animal coming into the roadway. (Driver inattention and speed are the most common factors in deer-vehicle crashes.)
- Reduce speed in darkness, rain and fog. These conditions can reduce your ability to see a deer on or near the road.
- Although deer warning signs may be posted in areas of higher deer activity, deer collisions can occur anywhere in Maine.

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- If you spot deer near the road or crossing it, warn other vehicles in the area by lightly tapping your brakes, quickly flashing your high beam headlights or sounding your horn (but be aware that this may startle the animals). Deer often travel in groups, so if you see one deer on or near the road, expect others to follow.

Friday:

Opener/Fact

- Deer-vehicle collisions can happen anywhere in Maine.
- Deer crashes have increased 80% over the last 10 years.
- During the last three years, every Maine county had least 250 reported deer-vehicle collisions. Penobscot, Kennebec and Cumberland counties each had nearly 500 crashes a year.

Tips:

Here are some general tips to help you avoid collisions with deer and other large animals:

- Make sure you can see an adequate distance ahead. Search the roadway and off-road areas 20-30 seconds ahead. (Identify animals that may enter your path of travel well in advance.)
- Use high beam headlights when appropriate.
- Slow down--headlights cannot illuminate far enough ahead to provide enough reaction time at higher speeds.
- Decide how to minimize collision risk. Sudden swerves could make you lose control and make you even more vulnerable, so make safe decisions.
- The days are getting shorter this time of year, so you are more likely to be commuting in the dark- when deer crashes are frequent. Drive carefully.
- Always have everyone buckle up...and make sure to buckle your own seat belt too.